HONG KONG

BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Chronology and Early Church History in the New Testament

1998 Lectures

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Dr. E. Jerry Vardaman

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Dr. E. Jerry Vardaman

Biblical Archaeologist & New Testament Scholar

Times & Topics of Seminar

1. June 15, 98 (Monday) 10:00-12:00a.m.
   "The Birth of Christ in the Light of Chronological Research"
2. June 22, 98 (Monday) 10:00-12:00a.m.
   "The Career of Pilate and the Time of His Dismissal in Judea"
3. June 29, 98 (Monday) 10:00-12:00a.m.
   "The Period of Paul's Conversion and Career in the Light of Chronological Research"

HONG KONG BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Seminar

Chronology and Early Church History in the New Testament

Dr. E Jerry Vardaman has served for 45years in the academic classroom. He was the founding director of the Cobb Institute of Archaeology at Mississippi State University(1973) and served there also as Professor of Religion until his retirement in 1994. He is a graduate of Baylor University (Ph.D. 1974), and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (Th.D. 1957). He taught Biblical Archaeology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for 14 years before joining the Mississippi State University faculty as Professor of Religion, and Director, Cobb Institute of Archaeology, in 1973. He has participated in various Near East excavations – Bethel; Shechem; Ramat Rachel(where Jehoakim built [Jer. 22] "the house of vermillion"); Caesarea: Ashdod, Machaerus(where John the Baptist died) and Elusa(where Hagar was expelled), and is the author of 6 books or dissertations, plus numerous scholarly articles and studies. His most recent research has been in the field of New Testament Chronology.

Books & Dissertations:

1957 Hermeticism and the Fourth Gospel, Southwestern Seminary (Dissertation).

1964 Archaeology and the Living Word, Nashville: Broadman Press.

1964 Teacher's Yoke :.Studies in Memory of H. Trantham, Waco:Baylor Press; co-edited with Jas. Leo Garrett.

1974 The Inscriptions of King Herod I, Waco:Baylor Univ. (Dissertation)

1983 Chronos, Kairos, Christos-I; J. Finegan Festschrift.--Winona Lake : Eisenbrauns; co-edited with E. Yamauchi.

1998 Chronos, Kairos, Christos-II; Ray Summers Memorial Vol. Macon : Mercer.

"Christianity, unlike most religions, has a strong historical foundation. The Bible deals with specific *people*, at specific *places*, at specific *points of time*. Whereas, many religions are based on unreliable legend or pure mythology, the Bible 'records God's mighty works in history.' These mighty works were done on the 'center stage' of history; as Paul said, '.....these things have not been done in a corner' (Acts 26:26). The history of the church is a part of the history of the world and, thus, open for historical examination.

Chronology is the backbone of history. Chronology is the key to understanding more fully every segment of history, including Biblical history. From a detailed study of early historical sources, one can conclude that Jesus was born in 12 B.C. Following the chronology of Biblical events from the birth of Jesus through the time of the fall of Herod's temple and noting what was happening in the surrounding world at that time, we find that many biblical references come alive with meaning."

--Dr. Jerry Vardaman.

You are invited to a series of lectures on the chronology of the early history of the New Testament, to be held at the Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary on the last three Mondays in June:

Interpreter	:	Dr. Joe P.L. Sun
Time	:	10:00a.m. - 12:00noon
Delivery of Lecture	--	1 hour
Tea break	--	10 minutes
Question & Answer	--	50 minutes
Registration Fee	:	HK$50
Inquiry	:	Tel : 2715 9511 Ext 144(Ms. Silvia Lau)
		2715 9511 Ext 153(Ms. Fion Sze)

June 15,1998

CHRONOLOGY AND EARLY CHURCH HISTORY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

©

Dr. E. Jerry Vardaman

Introduction:

President Alfred Kong, Dean Jeffrey Sharp, honored faculty, staff, students, professors in other institutions, servants of Christ in various capacities, and guests; I would be remiss if I did not mention the deep gratitude which Alfalene, my wife, and I have for all who are associated with Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary in this Spring semester and "J" term, of 1998. You have been thoughtful, kind and supportive - far beyond anything which we have deserved. You have extended help in so many ways that we cannot number all of them. We can only tell you that we recognize the Spirit of Christ when we associate with those filled with His Spirit, and we have experienced the joy of His presence in your lives and in our lives; we have associated with you now for almost half of a year from the time we arrived here from America in the middle of January until the beginning of July, when we shall return to our home in Mississippi.

We have a formidable challenge before us during this month of June. President Kong requested that our lectures explore this vitally important subject of New Testament chronology. As I said in your printed program:

> "Christianity, unlike most religions, has a strong historical foundation. The Bible deals with specific *people*, at specific *places*, at specific *points of time*. Whereas, many religions are based on unreliable legend or pure mythology, the Bible 'records God's mighty works in history.' These mighty works were done on the 'center stage' of history; as Paul said, '....these things have not been done in a corner' (Acts 26:26). The history of the church is a part of the history of the world and, thus open for historical examination.
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> Chronology is the backbone of history. Chronology is the key to understanding more fully every segment of history, including Biblical history. ....Following the chronology of Biblical events from the birth of Jesus through the time of the fall of Herod's temple and noting what was happening in the surrounding world at that time, we find that many biblical references come alive with meaning."

Exactly a century ago this year, Sir William M. Ramsay published his famous book, Was Christ Born at Bethlehem? (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1898)[1]; Ramsay sought to answer negative criticism then and, still current[2] which questioned the historical accuracy of Luke's Gospel. For example, Ramsay believed that newly discovered ancient papyri from Egypt which provided evidence of a 14-year census cycle, in use in the Roman world of the First Century A.D. and later, should be considered in trying to assess the accuracy of Luke's statements (2:1-2) about the census of Quirinius.[3]

One hundred years later than Ramsay, scholars are still struggling with many of the same problems with which he wrestled. Just in early 1998, for examples, we should note that significant books are appearing related to the Nativity of Jesus, and to the broader field of Biblical chronology:

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[1] C f. his "Census of Quirinius," Expositor I (1897), pp. 274-286, 425-435, written the year before.

[2] Esp. due to D. Strauss' work, The Life of Jesus, Vol. I -III. London: Chapman Bros., 1846. See esp. Vol. I, pp. 200-208, where Strauss finds fault with the idea of Luke's universal census; or, if one did come in Judea, it could not have occurred under Herod I, nor Archelaus; Quirinius was not governor of Syria; the Romans did not require subjects to return to their native residences, etc. Strauss concludes that there is thus no guarantee that Bethlehem was Jesus' birthplace (p. 208). Strauss's arguments influenced Schürer quite strongly, of course; they also occasioned, justly, Ramsay's objections. The basic objections which Strauss raised to Luke's accuracy still serve as the primary framework followed by the editors of the new Schürer, History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ, see I, "Census of Quirinius, Luke 2:1-5," pp. 399-427. Evangelical Christians should know of this study, full of useful and up-to-date bibliographical sources; Schürer represents the classical position of one who rejects the historicity of Luke's statement that Quirinius governed Syria at the time of Christ's birth. Schürer used Strauss' negativism, but refined it in a more scholarly way, and his recent editors modernize this now-untenable position still further; I describe their patchwork as "muddling through."

[3] While Schürer felt that Ramsay took a step backwards from previous approaches in the study of Quirinius' census (I, pp. 424-425, n. 130) we present here also Deissman's opinion: Light from the Ancient East. Trans. L.R. M. Strachan. New York: George H. Doran Co., 1927. See esp. p.271, note 4: "I think it possible that [Ramsay's].... line of argument may really lead on to something." See also, pp. 5-6, note 1, and figure 1 (the Caristanus inscription). Deissman (p. 270 f.) pointed out that the Gaius Vibius Maximus papyrus (A.D. 104) shows that households returning for the census were not "a mere figment of St. Luke."

Nikos Kokkinos, The Herodian Dynasty: Origins, Role in Society and Eclipse. Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha, Supp. Series 30, Sheffield Academic Press, 1998; pp. 518.[4] Kokkinos is an Oxford Graduate, a native of ~~Greece~~ Alexandria in Egypt, and an extremely meticulous scholar. I find myself in agreement with many of his positions (he also dates Jesus's birth in 12 B.C.), but with others I disagree; nevertheless his theories always deserve respect, and attention, for his research is always carefully done. He especially places us under debt by his excellent research on the Herodian family, due to their many connections with N.T. history. The book is filled with chronological suggestions, many of which will not please all readers.

Jack Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998. Finegan's book is a revision and expansion of his 1964 work of the same name (Princeton: Univ. Press). In N.T. chronology he has shifted in this book to quite different views from his original positions. The man is to be commended for staying so active and productive, for, in this year, 1998, he turns 90 years of age!

Jerry Vardaman, ed. Chronos, Kairos, Christos II. Chronological, Nativity, and Religious Studies in Memory of Ray Summers. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998.[5]

While much progress continues to be made in problems relating to the birth of Jesus and the time that it took place, I make bold to predict that 100 years from now scholars will still be at work to determine many other elusive aspects of Nativity

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[4] Another work of prime importance on chronology, which has recently appeared, relating to the N.T. period is Roger T. Beckwith, Calendar and Chronology, Jewish and Christian, Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums 23 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996).

[5] This book should be read in connection with an earlier work of the same title: (4) Chronos, Kairos, Christos. Ed. by Jerry Vardaman and Ed Yamauchi, Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1989. These works grew out of Nativity Conferences (1983 and 1992) in America. The first one (CKC) was a Festschrift in honor of Prof. J. Finegan; the second one (CKC II), now appearing, is a Gedenkschrift in memory of Ray Summers. Each volume is filled with very diverse opinions on almost all phases of all of the chronological problems treated. If other collections of this type are undertaken, readers can expect the same type of diversity in future editions of chronological studies, since no two scholars agree throughout in this area of investigation. Each of the studies in the CKC series refer readers to other current literature on N.T. chronology.

questions which remain at that time, assuming that the world order continues that long.

It would be quite foolish for us to believe that we can finally and totally solve even a single one of the knotty problems and historical mysteries relating to N.T. chronology during these three lectures of such brief scope. We can perhaps make a beginning. Our Chinese friends say that "a journey of a 1000 miles starts with a single step." At least we can all become more aware of how many chronological problems there are in the New Testament -- and how many more there are in the Old Testament, since it covers a longer span of time. We can have a greater appreciation of the tasks done by scholars who devote themselves to chronological studies. These scholars must master many languages and investigate minute details of history. Henry Ford once said that "History is the bunk!" For students of chronology, history is like a bank. History has valuable information stored in its dusty storage vaults and hidden chambers, all of which information will help us to solve Biblical mysteries more clearly, and definitively.

A. When Was Jesus Born?

Luke 2:1-2 informs us that Jesus was born during the time that Augustus decreed that the Roman world should be subjected to a census enrollment. This enrollment was the first ~~such~~ Census Quirinus conducted when ~~Quirinius was~~ he governing in the province of Syria. There can be little doubt that the story of Jesus's birth is the most beautiful story in the world. These simple, straightforward statements of Luke, however, have been turned into a literary battlefield by well-meaning scholars who have found historical problems, and faults, not only with first two verses of this chapter of Luke, but with the entire account.[6] One enters with trepidation therefore on any attempt to add anything to our modern understanding of Luke's account, knowing that whatever one expresses on the subject will be the object of intense hatred, prolonged debate, and unbridled ridicule by those who hold opposing viewpoints. Those who differ with the writer have equal rights to express their opinions, of course. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom."

The problem of Quirinius is the number one historical problem of the New Testament. The solution to some of the mystery surrounding this chapter of Luke

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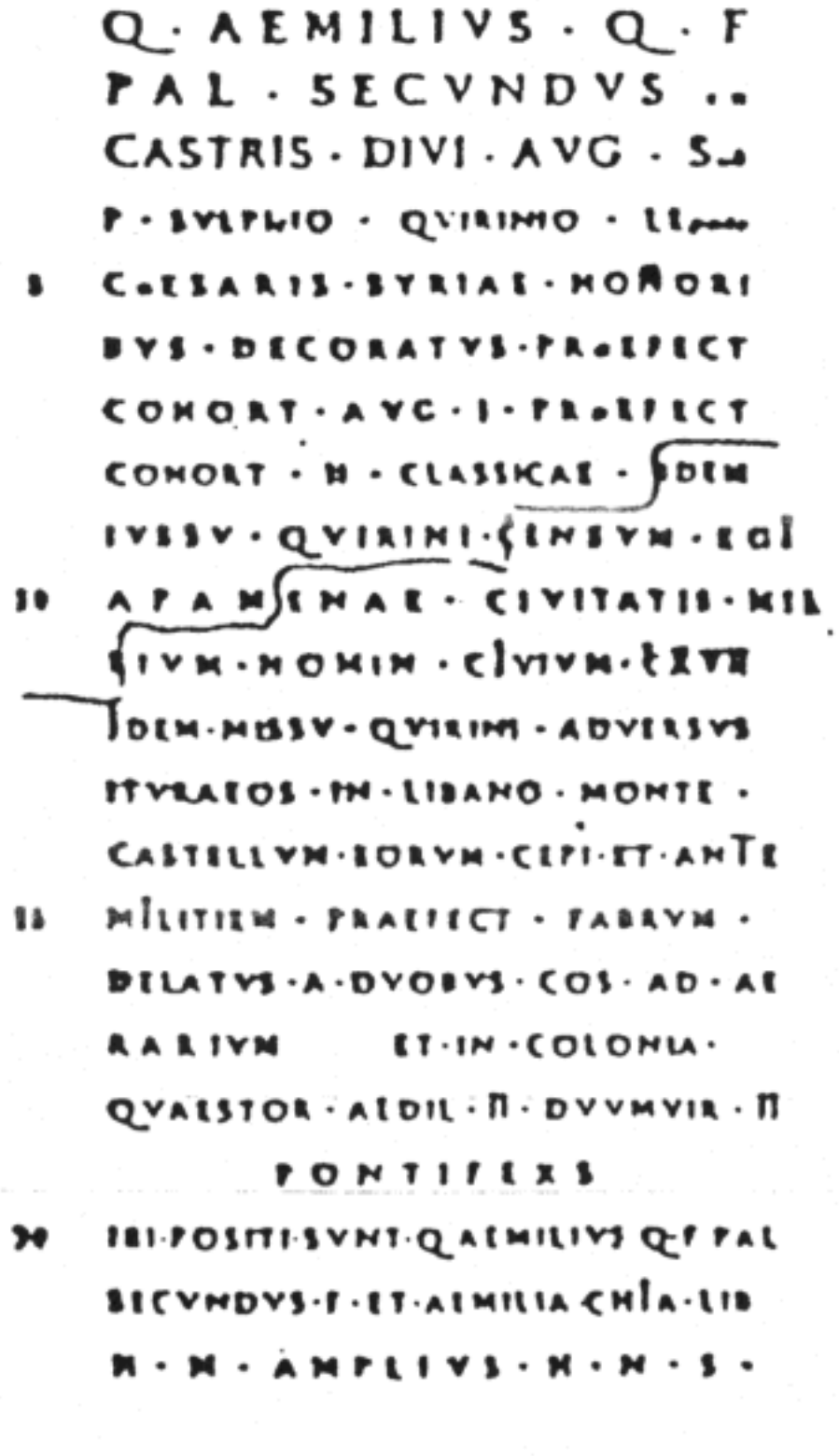
[6] Ernest Renan, Life of Jesus, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, reprinted 1991; see p.36, n.1, even questioned the authenticity of the Lapis Tiburtinus, an inscription some of us supppose to mention Quirinius; Renan called it a "false" inscription.

might have been available to us for a long time, but not hitherto clearly recognized and accepted. I have prepared an extensive bibliography of scholarly opinions on this subject which I attach to these lectures, and those who care to examine what the various critics have said for and against the historical integrity of Luke in his statements should feel free to consult that "Select Bibliography."

To this student of N.T. history, however, what former critics of Luke's account have said for and against Luke's accuracy is not the determining factor. What matters to me are small letters which I have noticed as present on ancient inscriptions. Space and time do not permit us to be technical and extensive in this presentation. Let us examine here an inscription known as the Lapis Venutus (=the Stone of Venice).

The Latin version reads:


Q · AEMILIVS · Q · F
PAL · SECVNDVS ..
CASTRIS · DIVI · AVG · S..
P · SVLPLIO · QVIRINO · LL..
CAESARIS · SYRIAE · HONORI
BVS · DECORATVS · PRAEFECT
COHORT · AVG · I · PRAEFECT
COHORT · M · CLASSICAE · IDEM
IVSSV · QVIRINI · SENSVM · EQ
APAMENAE · CIVITATIS · MIL
LIVM · NOMIN · CIVIVM · LXVII
IDEM · MISSV · QVIRINI · ADVERSVS
ITVRAEOS · IN · LIBANO · MONTE ·
CASTELLVM · EORVM · CEPI · ET · ANTE
MILITIAM · PRAEFECT · FABRVM ·
DELATVS · A · DVOBVS · COS · AD · AE
RARIVM ET · IN · COLONIA ·
QVAESTOR · AEDIL · II · DVVMVIR · II
PONTIFEX
IBI · POSITI · SVNT · Q · AEMILIVS Q · F PAL
SECVNDVS · F · ET · AEMILIA CHIA · LIB
M · M · AMPLIVS · M · M · S ·

Q · AEMILIVS · Q · F
PAL · SECVNDVS ..
CASTRIS · DIVI · AVG · S..
P · SVLPLIO · QVIRINIO · L..
CAESARIS · SYRIAE · MORI
DVS · DECORATVS · PRAEFECT
COHORT · AVG · I · PRAEFECT
COHORT · M · CLASSICAE · IDEM
IVSSV · QVIRINI · LENTVLI · EQ
APAMENAE · CIVITATIS · MIL
LIVM · NOMIN · CIVIVM · LXVI
IDEM · MISSV · QVIRINI · ADVERSVS
ITVRAEOS · IN · LIBANO · MONTE ·
CASTELLVM · EORVM · CEPI · ET · ANTE
MILITIAM · PRAEFECT · FABRVM ·
DILATVS · A · DVOBVS · COS · AD · AE
RARIVM ET · IN · COLONIA ·
QVAESTOR · AEDIL · II · DVVMVIR · II
PONTIFEX
HIC · POSITI · SVNT · Q · AEMILIVS Q · F PAL
SECVNDVS · F · ET · AEMILIA CHIA · LIB
M · M · AMPLIVS · M · M · S ·

Translation of the Inscription of Aemilius Secundus (Lapis Venetus)[7]

"Quintus Aemelius Secundus, son of Quintus, of the gens Palatina, in the military field service of the God Augustus under P(ublius) Sulpicius Quirinius, Legate of Caesar, in Syria. He [Secundus] was decorated with military honors: Prefect of the First Augustan Band [Cohort]: Prefect of the II Cohort Classica, [=a naval unit].

By order of Quirinius, I made a census of the city of Apamea, which had 117,000 citizens; the same was sent by Quirinius against the Itureans. I seized one of their strongholds [=Baitocece] on Mount Lebanon; and at the beginning of my military career I was Prefect of the Engineers, but was appointed to the

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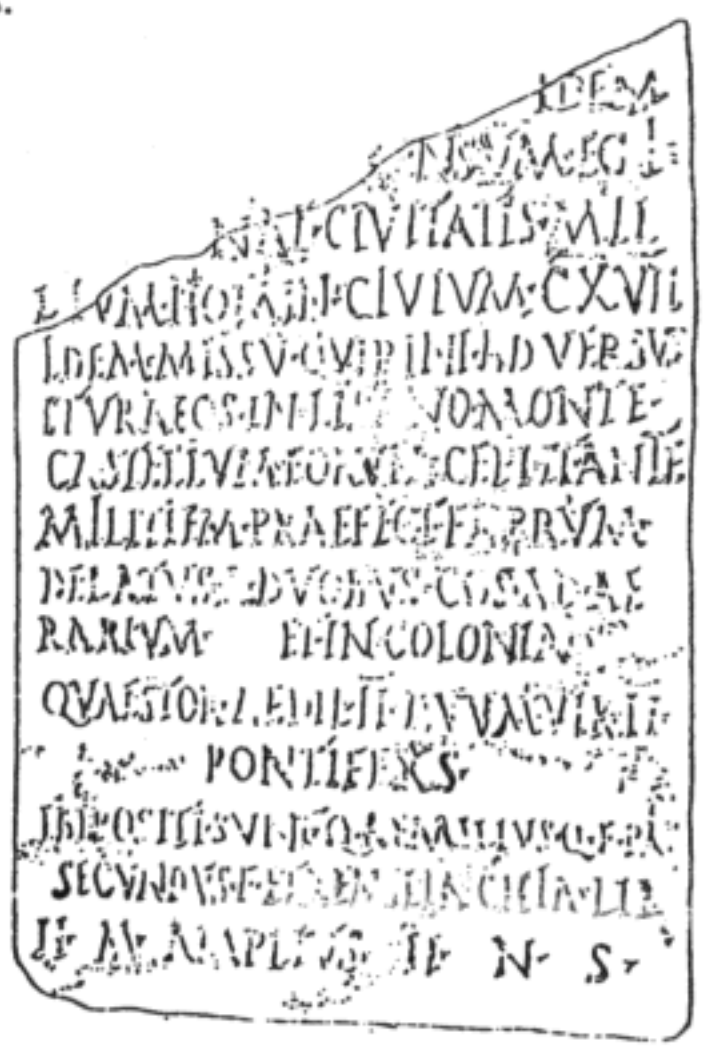
[7] For convenience, one should consult for this document, Hermann Dessau, Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae, no. 2683; and Sir W.M. Ramsay, Was Christ Born at Bethlehem, London; Holder and Stoughton, 1905, p.274; cf. also CIL V. 136; Ephemeris Epigraphica IV, p.538. Baetocece ("House of Castor Oil") possessed a temple of Baal. This sanctuary had been granted "eternal" exemption from certain taxes and given other privileges by Antiochus III, and now with Quirinius' new tax measures afoot, the older privileges of the place seemed threatened and the inhabitants there put up resistance which Secundus had to put down. For an inscription of Baetocece which throws much light on this matter, see J. -P. Rey-Coquais, Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie, ed. L. Jalabert, et al. Paris: P. Geuthner, 1970. Vol. VII, no. 4028, pp. 54-74; cf. by the same writer, "Baetocece," Princeton Encyclopedia of Classical Sites, ed. R. Stillwell, et al; Princeton: University Press, 1976, p. 135. One can believe that Theudas (Acts 5:36 ff.) also led a revolt ca. 12 B.C. (as we learn from microletters), just as Judas led a revolt in Quirinius' taxation in A.D. 6. Baetocece provides another example of an uprising against the hated Roman taxation system, and texts there date to the time of Augustus, and earlier. See Vol. VII, especially no. 4028, "B", pp. 55f. Within Baitocece's recognized boundaries, its residents possessed freedom from certain taxes, the area had the right of asylum, yet possessed freedom from giving lodging to unwanted outsiders; see text "B", pp. 56,57. Such privileges (those seeking asylum also being free of certain taxes - see p. 63) could only spell trouble with the census takers of the Roman period and help to explain why Secundus had to put down resistance he found there. Augustus is called a god on this text. See esp. line 32 on p.56 (text D); "A decree of the city sent to the God, Augustus." It could be argued, of course, that the text so reads since it was cut on the wall at Baitocece long after Augustus's death. On the other hand, it could be an exact copy of a letter, written to Augustus while alive, and we so regard it. "Theos" in Greek we equate with "Divi" of the Secundus text; the word was certainly so used while Augustus was alive(!) and there is also no further valid reson to date the Secundus text after Augustus's death on Aug. 19, A.D. 14.

Aerarium [the Senatorial treasury] by the two consuls; and in the colony [of Berytus] I was Questor-Aedile [Treasurer] two times; I was Duumvir [one of two chief magistrates] two times; [I was also] Pontifex S[acrorum? = functioning priest].

This was placed here by Q. Aemilius Secundus, son of Quintus, of the gens Palatina, and by Aemilia Chia, former slave woman set free. This monument [i.e. tomb] does not pass on to any heir."

This inscription had already arrived in Venice before 1676, since it was copied at that time by Sertorio Orsato after it arrived in Venice from Beirut on board a trading vessel. It was put on board the Venetian ship to serve as ballast on its return from Beirut. There was only one other colony in Lebanon in the Roman period of Augustus (i.e. Heliopolis). But Beirut was the colony located on the sea and is positively the "colony" mentioned in this text. The document made its way to the house of a man named Nicolai Veniero where it was noticed by Orsato and published in his third edition of a volume on ancient texts (Li Marmi eruditi, overo Lettere sopra alcune antiche inscrizioni di Sertorio Orsato. Padova; G. Comino, 1719. see p.276). The inscription was complete when first copied. Then the text was lost. A little over 100 years ago the house of Veniero was demolished and workers found the lower part of the text again. When scholars were able to study again this lower portion of the text they recognized that the document was genuine. But its true importance has not been recognized again in modern times. It refers to the same census which Luke mentions (2.2) and not to the one Josephus describes (Ant. 18.1,26 = the second census of Quirinius). Following is the author's drawing of this lower portion of the text, which is all that remains, no forger could have produced this text, as was believed for many years.



THE INSCRIPTION OF AEMILIUS SECUNDUS FROM BEIRUT

The "census' which Quirinius directed Secundus to take of Apamea is referred to in the second line preserved here. Quirinius is mentioned again in line five and sends Secundus against the fortress of Baetocece on Mt. Lebanon. The microletters date this text to B.C. 11 or 10. The microletters give numerous references to Corinth, both to its destruction in 146 B.C. and to J. Caesar's refounding of the place as a colony (46 B.C.) The Aemilius Secundus of the text is likely to be linked with an elite family from Corinth connected with the construction of a Macellum there (early in the history of the colony). David W. J. Gill (Tyndale Bulletin 43.2 [Nov. 1992] pp. 389-393) translates that text as follows:

> Quintus Cornelius Secundus, son of [---], of the tribe Aemilia, and his wife Maecia, daughter of [Quintus], his son [---Cornelius Secundus] Maecianus, his son Quintus Cornelius Secundus, his [daughter] Cornelia [Secunda, who is the wife of Quintus] Maecius Cleogenes the freedman of Quintus (Maecius), [built (?)] the meatmarket [---] along with [---] and facilities for fish [----].

The historian Dio Cassius implies that Augustus carried out a census (the same word which Luke uses - apographē - is the same word which Dio Cassius uses!) in 12 B.C. See his Roman History 54.28.4-5. In this period, as censor, Augustus could not look at the dead bodies of either Agrippa (12B.C.) nor Octavia (11B.C.) or the current census would have needed to be taken again (see Dio under the years 12/11 B.C. - neatly fitting the time of Quirinius' census; Dio 54.28.4; 54.35.4).

Let us return to the Secundus text. The text describes a census which he carried out in Syria - Phoenicia under the orders of Quirinius. This inscription has been grossly misunderstood. The earliest interpreter of the inscription rightly saw that this text referred to the same census which Quirinius conducted and which is referred to by Luke. Unfortunately, T. Mommsen (Res Gestae^2, pp. 161-178: CIL III. 6687) a great scholar of Roman history and Latin epigraphy, misled, (as far as we are concerned) most students of modern times by asserting that the Beirut inscription of Aemelius Secundus, Sr., was to be referred to the time of what we believe is Quirinius' second census, which is the one Josephus refers to in Ant. 18.1. This second census occurred in A.D. 6/7 as is well known. Mommsen, of course, thought that this census in A.D. 6/7 was the only one which Quirinius conducted. The reason Mommsen dated the Beirut inscription as late as he did, and understood the census it referred to as occurring late, is because the inscription refers to Augustus as "Divi" (i.e., as deified; usually the Romans called their emperors by this title after their death; in the case of Augustus, this occurred after A.D. 14).

One should not forget, however, that on the coins of Beirut (see G.F. Hill, Catalogue of Greek Coins of Phoenicia. London: British Museum, 1910, pp. 53-54, no. 14,15), that during her lifetime, Anthony's wife, Cleopatra, who ruled there immediately before Augustus, is referred to as a new "goddess" and there is, thus, no real, compelling reason to date the Beirut inscription as late as Mommsen did. On coins of Beirut Augustus is frequently called "Divi" and we are not convinced that all such coins were struck after his death. Throughout the east Augustus was called a god while alive[8]. By our use of microletters on the Secundus inscription I assign the date of 11/10 B.C. to this text.[9] It is, thus, a tombstone which records the death of Aemelius Secundus, Senior, who followed Quirinius' orders and carried out a census of Apamea, and who also stormed a fortress on Mt. Lebanon (from microletters we know that this was the ancient fortress called Baetocece - modern Hosn Suleiman). Note that the census mentioned on the inscription occurred before 10 B.C.;[10] we follow, also, Dio's dating here, and thus assign Quirinius' census of Luke 2 to the years 12/11 B.C.; microletters on the Lapis Venutus state that Apamea's census under Quirinius took place in the same year he was consul (=12 B.C.).

THE DATES IN SECUNDUS' CAREER IN THE LAPIS VENUTUS (ILS 2683):

The cursus honorem (list of honors) of Roman soldiers, in their records, is not always given in a chronological fashion, but, frequently, in reverse arrangement. We see the ~~reverse order~~ flexibility at work in the Lapis Venutus.

We attempt an outline here of Secundus' career. We are quite conscious of gaps, and that our arrangement will not please all students, particularly those who have been convinced that Secundus' text relates to the time of Quirinius' work to make an assessment of the property of the Jews and to liquidate Archelaus' estate (Ant. 18.1), in A.D. 6/7. But, nothing is said about that in the inscription itself. Even so, we face ~~many~~ some uncertainties in our chronology here.

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[8] See B.W. Winter, "The Imperial Cult," in The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting; Vol. 2 (Graeco - Roman Setting). Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994, pp. 93 - 103. We should also remember that Apamea had numerous adjacent villages which would have swelled the overall population in its area far beyond 117,000 citizens. See Winter, ibid, p.230 and n.14 and ref. there.

[9] Nikos Kokkinos, Herodian Dynasty, Sheffield: Academic Press, 1998, p.299, m.125 dates the text to A.D. 10-20. I assign my date of 10 B.C. since that is the date assigned by the inscription itself.

[10] The year 10 B.C., of course, was the year Secundus died.

cf. esp. M. Rostovtzeff, Soc. & Econ. Hist of the Hellenistic World. Oxford: Clarendon Press, I, 1972, p. 498f.

The Beginning of Secundus' Career: (in the Republican period)

He was an officer of the engineers (Praefectus Fabrum). We have seen already a possible connection with an elite family near the time of the founding of Corinth (46 B.C.). Secundus enlists there about 41 BC.
He was sent by the two Consuls to the Senatorial Treasury (Aerarium); cf. notice of Borghesi, teacher of Mommsen, in a letter to W. Henzen, that this practice by the consuls was limited to the Republican period.[11] Was this transfer possibly related to the Roman provincial census of 29/28B.C.? We offer this ~~only as a guess~~ suggestion in light of microletters which identify the 2 consuls as Augustus & Agrippa (joint consuls in 28 BC. & 27 BC.).

Secundus' Intermediate Career:

He was Praefect of the Second Cohort Classica (=naval unit; met Chia at this time?)
He was Praefect of the first Augustan Cohort.
Discharged about the time Berytus founded as colony (making his normal enlistment time about 40 B.C. or slightly earlier.)

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[11] For Borghesi's opinion, see W. Henzen, ed. of Vol. III, of Johann Kaspar von Orelli, Inscriptionum latinarum selectarum amplissima collectio ad illustrandam Romanae antiquitatis, disciplinam accomodata ac magnarum collectionum supplementa complura emendationesque exhibens. Turici: Orellii, Fuesslini, 1828-1856, cf.p.56. He quoted a letter which he received from Borghesi pointing out that Borghesi saw an anachronism in the statement about Secundus being appointed by the two consuls to the Aerarium, feeling that was a practice totally limited to the Republican period. We see no problem in accepting this view of Borghesi, but reject his opinion doubting the authenticity of the text (before the lower part was rediscovered, and reexamined). If Borghesi correctly limited the practice of the two consuls appointing personnel to the Aerarium in the Republican Period (i.e., closer to the time of J. Caesar) then by necessity we must place Secundus early in the history of Beirut as a colony. Secundus would have needed to serve about 60 years, or more, if he had out-lived Augustus (who died in A.D. 14)! It is not even likely, therefore, that Secundus' census would even refer to the census of A.D. 6/7 which would still require Secundus to have a military career of about 50 years, which again would be most unusual. Roman soldiers were normally discharged after a tenure of 26 years; Secundus had enlisted beforehand approximately 30 years, more or less, by the time of Quirinius' census in Syria in 12 B.C. and it is quite possible that he died of old age, not in military action? The stress involved in his Baitocece campaign should not be overlooked, of course, and perhaps proved to be too much for this retired veteran?

Secundus' Final Days at Berytus: (this colony founded in 15 B.C.)

15-14 B.C. - Secundus a Pontifex (Priest). Was he a priest in Augustus' cult? If so, the reference to Augustus as a god was a natural one to use.

14-12 B.C. - Secundus a Duumvir (=one of two men of the city who oversaw affairs - somewhat like modern aldermen).

12-11 B.C. - Secundus a Questor-Aedile (Treasurer); as such, with prior military experience, sent by Quirinius to oversee the census of Apamea in Syria. Recorded 117,000 citizens. Decorated with honors under Quirinius.

10 B.C. - Baitocece resisted census of 12/11 B.C.; Quirinius sends him to enforce taking of census there. He takes enceinte. Apparently died of old age, or stress, soon afterwards (or in seige itself?).

10 B.C. - His son, Quintus Aemelius Secundus, and Aemelia Chia, an ex-slave (now his widow?), oversee completion of his tomb, at Berytus.

It will be recognized that the chronology as presented above demands that Secundus moved through his latest posts in tight order, and leaves little or no room, or any time to spare, when he changed from one post in Berytus to the other. Again, those who object to the use of microletters to fix the date of the text to 10 B.C. will find reason to disagree with the chronology here, but we simply show here that the chronology above is possible, since we believe that we have accurately dated the inscription to 10 B.C. This enables one to be at least approximately correct on the chronology of Secundus' final years, though there is much room for refinement on many points of present uncertainties on the chronology of his early career, especially.

B. Quirinius as Governor of Syria:

In the time of Augustus the governor of Syria was normally a proconsul (see Winter, 2, p. 243 ff.). The Lapis Venutus does not make absolutely certain exactly what Quirinius' title was; and, it was a tombstone, not an official document or decree from an authorized Roman official stating what technical post Quirinius ~~controlled~~ filled. But enough is clear to demonstrate that Quirinius' work in Syria dealt with Roman census matters, and this is essentially what Luke says about Quirinius. Luke's statement that this was the first census that Quirinius controlled helps us to believe that the census when Archelaus was dismissed, that Josephus mentions, which is connected with Quirinius, was a later one (Ant. 19.1 ff.). We provide here a quite provisional list of the Roman governors about the time of the late First Century B.C.

through the time of Jesus, but the reader needs to realize that many gaps in chronological knowledge still exist. Mommsen proposed that Qurinius might have ruled 4-2 B.C.(12) This is not certain, and scholars still struggle with the chronology of Flaccus, Vitellius (or Visellius?), Lamia, etc., as well as with Quirinius' chronology.

Roman Governors of Syria

(65 BC - AD 32)

		BC	
Scaurus	-	65-62	3 yrs.
Philippus	-	61-60	2 yrs.
Marcellinus	-	59-58	2 yrs.
Gabinius	-	57-55	2 yrs.
Crassus	-	54-53	1 yr.
Longinus	-	53-51	2 yrs.
Bibulus	-	51-50	1 yr.
Veiento	-	50-49	1 yr.
Nascica	-	49-48	1 yr.
Sex. I. Caesar	-	47-46	1 yr.
Q.C. Bassus	-	46-44	2 yrs.
Vetus	-	45	1 yr.
Murcus	-	44	1 yr.
Longinus	-	44-42	2 yrs.
Saxa	-	41-40	1 yr.
P.V. Bassus	-	39-38	2 yrs.
Sosius	-	38-37	1 yr.

(Only 2 of the Roman Governors of Syria are known between 37 - 31 BC)

Plancus	-	35	1 yr.
Bibulus	-	34/33 - 33/32	1 yr.(?)
Q. Didius	-	30	1 yr.
Corvinus	-	29	1 yr.
Cicero	-	29-27 or 27-25	2 yrs.(?)
Varro	-	24-23	1 yr.
M.V. Agrippa	-	23-13/12	approx. 11 yrs.(?)
Quirinius	-	12-10(?)	2 yrs.
Titius	-	10	1 yr.(?)
C.S. Saturninus	-	9-7	2 yrs.
Varus	-	7-4	2(3) yrs.
L.C. Piso(?)	-	4-1 (Mommsen & Schürer	3 yrs.(?)
Quirinius (?)	-	4-2 here are questionable)	2 yrs.
		AD	
Caius I. Caesar	-	1 BC - AD 4	5 yrs.
L.V. Saturninus	-	4-5	1 yr.
Quirinius (?)	-	6-7 (was this term longer?)	2 yr.
C.M.C. Silanus	-	12-17	4-5 yrs.
C. Piso	-	17-19	2 yrs.
Saturninus	-	19-21	2 yrs.
Flaccus (?)	-	22-25(?)	2 1/2 yrs.(?)
Visellius (?)	-	25-26(?)	1 1/2 yr
Aelius Lamia	-	27-32(?) - stayed in Rome, did not rule in Syria, in person, but through his legate, Pacuvius(?)	5/6 yrs.(?)

Average length = approximately 2 1/2 yrs for each governor between Scaurus (65 BC) and A.Lamia (A.D. 32) the governor.

(12) Though Finegan (pp. 319, 366) prefers 2 B.C. for Jesus' birth, that year can not be a valid census year (See our table here below - p. 16). Moreover - Finegan's view that A.D. 29 was a jubilee (p. 340, Sect. 582, end) is misdated. Since Finegan (p. 116ff.) follows Zuckermann, A.D. 26/27 as a sabbatical would demand A.D. 27/28 as the jubilee year for ~~Bet~~ a jubilee in that period, if one occurred then -

C. The Cycles of Census Years:

There is much that we do not know as yet about the Roman practice of censi. On the other hand, little by little, light on the way the system worked continues to increase. We see some of the cruelty of the avaricious tax collectors described by Philo (Special Laws 3. 30. 159-164) but we are not sure whether the severe methods were carried out in the 17- or 14-year cycles in these same ways. We quote only a section of Philo's information:

> (159) Not long ago a certain man who had been appointed a collector of taxes in our country when some of those who appeared to owe such tribute fled out of poverty from a fear of intolerable punishment if they remained without paying, carried off their wives, and their children and their parents, and their whole families by force, beating and insulting them, and heaping every kind of contumely and ill treatment upon them, to make them either give information as to where the fugitives had concealed themselves, or pay the money instead of them, though they could not do either the one thing or the other, in the first place, because they did not know where they were, and secondly, because they were in still greater poverty than the men who had fled. (160) But this tax-collector did not let them go till he had tortured their bodies with racks and wheels, so as to kill them with newly invented kinds of death, fastening a basket full of sand to their necks with cords, and suspending it there as a very heavy weight, and then placing them in the open air in the middle of the market place, that some of them, being tortured and being overwhelmed by all these afflictions at once, the wind, and the sun, and the mockery of the passers by, and the shame, and the heavy burden attached to them, might faint miserably; and that the rest, being spectators, might be grieved and take warning by their punishment. (161) Some of whom, having a more acute sense of such miseries in their minds than that which they could receive though their eyes, since they sympathised with these unfortunates as if they were themselves suffering in the persons of others, put an end to their own lives by swords, or poison, or halters, thinking it a great piece of good luck for persons, liable to such misery, to be able to meet with death without torture. (162) But those who did not make haste to kill themselves, but who were seized before they could do so, were led away in a row, as in the case of actions for inheritance, according to their nearness of kindred, the nearest relations first, then those next to them in succession, in the second or third place, till they came to the last; and then, when there were no relations left, the cruelty proceeded on to the friends and neighbours of the fugitives; and sometimes it was extended even into the

cities and villages, which soon became desolate, being emptied of all their inhabitants, who all quitted their homes, and dispersed to places where they hoped that they might escape detection.

Lactantius, a Christian writer of the early Fourth Century describes practices very similar to those of Philo, and it seems easier to connect Lactantius with the 14-year cycle of a census taking, as described in his Manner in which the Persecutors Died, Chapt. 23:

But that which gave rise to public and universal calamity, was the tax imposed at once on each province and city. Surveyors having been spread abroad, and occupied in a general and severe scrutiny, horrible scenes were exhibited, like the outrages of victorious enemies, and the wretched state of captives. Each spot of ground was measured, vines and fruit-trees numbered, lists taken of animals of every kind, and a capitation-roll made up. In cities, the common people, whether residing within or without the walls, were assembled, the market-places filled with crowds of families, all attended with their children and slaves, the noise of torture and scourges resounded, sons were hung on the rack to force discovery of the effects of their fathers, the most trusty slaves compelled by pain to bear witness against their masters, and wives to bear witness against their husbands. In default of all other evidence, men were tortured to speak against themselves; and no sooner did agony oblige them to acknowledge what they had not, but those imaginary effects were noted down in the lists. Neither youth, nor old age, nor sickness, afforded any exemption. The diseased and the infirm were carried in; the age of each was estimated; and, that the capitation-tax might be enlarged, years were added to the young and stuck off from the old. General lamentation and sorrow prevailed. Whatever, by the laws of war, conquerors had done to the conquered, the like did this man presume to perpetrate against Romans and the subjects of Rome, because his forefathers had been made liable to a like tax imposed by the victorious Trajan, as a penalty on the Dacians for their frequent rebellions. After this, money was levied for each head, as if a price had been paid for liberty to exist; yet full trust was not reposed on the same set of surveyors, but others and others still were sent round to make further discoveries; and thus the tributes were redoubled, not because the new surveyors made any fresh discoveries, but because they added at pleasure to the former rates, lest they should seem to have been employed to no purpose. Meanwhile the number of animals decreased, and men died; nevertheless taxes were paid even for the dead, so that no one could either live or cease to live without being subject to impositions. There

> remained mendicants alone, from whom nothing could be exacted, and whom their misery and wretchedness secured from ill-treatment...they....were....put on vessels, and sunk in the sea. So merciful was he in making provision that under his administration no man should want! And thus, while he took effectual measures that none, under the feigned pretext of poverty, should elude the tax, he put to death a multitude of real wretches, in violation of every law of humanity.

Scholars now have available over two hundred census records preserved from the ancient world, primarily, yet not exclusively, from the dry sands of Egypt, but now others are coming to light in Palestine itself, particularly the region of the Dead Sea. These records enable us now to reconstruct rather fully the course of events during a normal census. Around May/June, an edict would be posted which notified inhabitants of all regions that a census was approaching. People were given one year to file their returns. Like modern day taxpayers, people had a tendency to wait until the last days to file. Many records show that some conscientious taxpayers filed at once, though most delayed payment as long as possible. Applied to Quirinius' census in 12/11 B.C. people in Judea when Jesus was born could file their census returns between May/June 12 B.C. until May/June 11 B.C. If Jesus was born at the time of an established Roman census cycle, therefore, 12/11 B.C. fits Luke's description, and what we know of other evidence pointing to this time as well. Our attached chart showing Roman Census Patterns from the time of Julius Caesar until Bar Kokhba's revolt might be helpful here to some of our readers. The chart is largely self explanatory and does not require further comment.

We now turn our attention briefly to other information which seemingly fits in with this time we suggest as the proper time to date Jesus' birth. We attempt now to give some help in our efforts to understand what stellar phenomena might explain Matthew's reference to a star which led the Magi to Bethlehem (~~chapter 2~~). (Mt. 2:1ff).

D. Halley's comet as the Christmas Star:

Between August 24 and October 17 of 12 B.C., a brilliant comet passed near the earth. It is now known as Halley's Comet. It arose in the due east but after September 9/10, it was seen only in the west. This comet made an extremely close (15 million miles) pass near the earth, and attained a brightness as bright as any star in the heavens at that time. Many of the things that Matthew mentions about the star that appeared at Jesus' birth fit this comet perfectly and cannot be made to agree with any other known heavenly phenomena of that period. This would give the general

ROMAN CENSUS PATTERNS FROM 46 B.C. (STARTED BY J. CAESAR) UNTIL THE SECOND JEWISH REVOLT BY BAR-KOKHBA (A.D. 132-135)

(CENSUS YEARS, coverings parts of 2 years, in BOLD TYPE)

J. Caesar's 17-year cycle (46 B.C. – A.D. 7)

Augustus's 14-year cycle (A.D. 6/7 – til 4th cent. A.D.)

Year of Census Declaration (= end)

Year of Census Decree (= start)

B.C.																**46**	17-yr. cycles
	45	44	43	42	41	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	**29**	
	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	**12**	
											B.C.	A.D.						
	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	
A.D.																		
	7	8	9*	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	**20****				Augustus' Change (?) to 14-yr. cycles
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	**34**				
	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	**48**				
	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	**62**				14-yr. cycles
	63***	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	**76**				
	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	**90**				
	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	**104**				
	105	106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	**118**				
	119	120	121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128	129	130	131	**132****				
	133	134	135	136	137	138	139	140	141	142	143	144	145	**146**				
	147	etc. etc.																

* Year of death of Varus and loss of his legions. Was change Augustus made in census cycle due to weakened army forces in defeat of Varus in Germany? In any event the decision to change probably was made between the time of Varus' loss and Augustus' death (Aug. 19, A.D. 14) so that A.D. 20/21 = next census year, and not A.D. 23/24. Since Tiberius did not like to make changes, we suggest that Augustus initiated this shift in the census cycle.

** We interpret A.D. 20/21 to be the census connected with Jesus' death, esp. when Jesus' enemies asked him if it were right to pay the census tax currently facing people at that time.

*** This is census year in which Jews were remiss in paying their census taxes. In A.D. 66, Agrippa II urged them to pay, unsuccessfully. Due to hostile attitude of Florus, Roman governor of Judea, First Revolt breaks out; Jews also believe that Florus wants to lay his hands on Temple funds. See reff. in chronology chart.

**** Year when Second Revolt under Bar Kokhba breaks out.

period of late 12 B.C. or spring 11 B.C. when Jesus was born—likely around the Tabernacle season in 12 B.C. This could explain why Mary went with Joseph to Bethlehem: it was customary for wives to attend festivals (cf. Luke 2:43), but not necessary for them to attend or be involved in census returns. The Old Testament tells us that the festival of Tabernacles was the most joyous one the Jews observed (Deut. 16:14; cf. Josephus *Antiquities* 4:206 [where women are to be included]; cf. the joy that accompanies it, in *Antiquities* 8:124 and 11:156), and, in my view, God chose to make the Tabernacle season of 12 B.C. the most joyous one of all - in which Jesus "became flesh and *tabernacled* among us" (John 1:14-18).[12]

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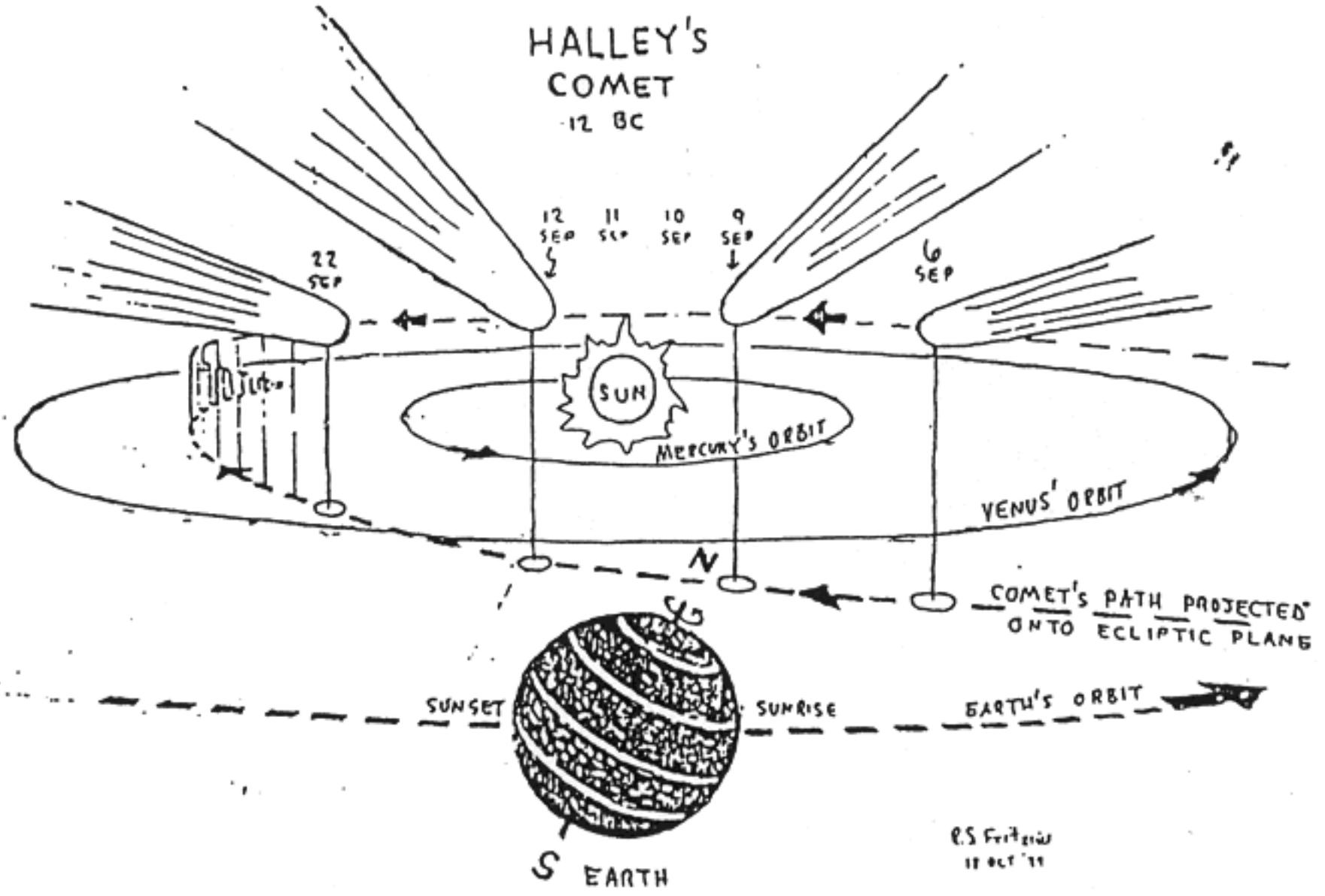
[12] For ancient Chinese information on Halley's Comet, see Ho Peng Yoke, "Ancient and Medieval Observations of Comets and Novae in Chinese Sources," Vistas in Astronomy, ed. A. Beer, Vol.5 (Oxford and New York: Pergamon Press, 1964), pp. 127-225. Yoke makes available the valuable Chinese observations of astronomical events which were recorded many centuries before and after Christ. Of particular importance for this study is his translation of the data pertaining to Halley's comet (no. 61, pp. 147-148), and the other references to that general period of time:

(61) 26th August, 12 B.C. "On a hsin-wei day in the seventh month of the first year of the Yuan-Yen reign-period a (po) comet was seen at the Tung-Ching (22nd lunar mansion), treading on Wu-Chu-Hou. Later it appeared at the north of Ho-Shu and moved to Hsien-Yuan and the Thai-Wei (enclosure). After that it travelled at the rate of more than 6 degrees (tu) per day, and was seen in the morning at the E. On the 13th day it appeared in the evening at the W. It trespassed against Tzhu-Fei, Chhang-Chhiu (=Hou-Hsing), (Pei-) (Tou and Saturn (Chen-Hsing), while its pointed rays again penetrated the Tzu-Wei (Enclosure) with Ta-Huo (Antares) right behind. It later reached the Milky Way, with its tail sweeping the region confining the stars Hou and Fei. It then went southwards and trespassed against Ta-Chio (Arcturus) and Shê-Thi. When it reached the Thien-Shih (Enclosure) its motion became retarded with time. Its rays entered the Thien-Shih (Enclosure), and after ten days it went westwards. After 56 days it went out of sight together with Tshang-Lung [i.e., when it was at Scorpius]." (CHS 27/3.3/28a; [end of p. 147; begin p. 148] Han Shu Pu Chu 27/3.3/23a; TCKM 7/29a; WHTK 286/6a; HHHY 29/10a; W51; DUBS (1938-1955), vol.2 p. 414. TCKM merely says, "In autumn, in the seventh month of the first year of the Yuan-Yen reign-period a (po) comet appeared at the Tung-Ching (22nd lunar mansion)."
This is mentioned by Crommelin and suggested by Chu Wên-Hsin to be Halley's Comet. Cf. also Schove (1955).

We give also the description from the Chinese astronomers ca. the Po comet in 10 B.C.:

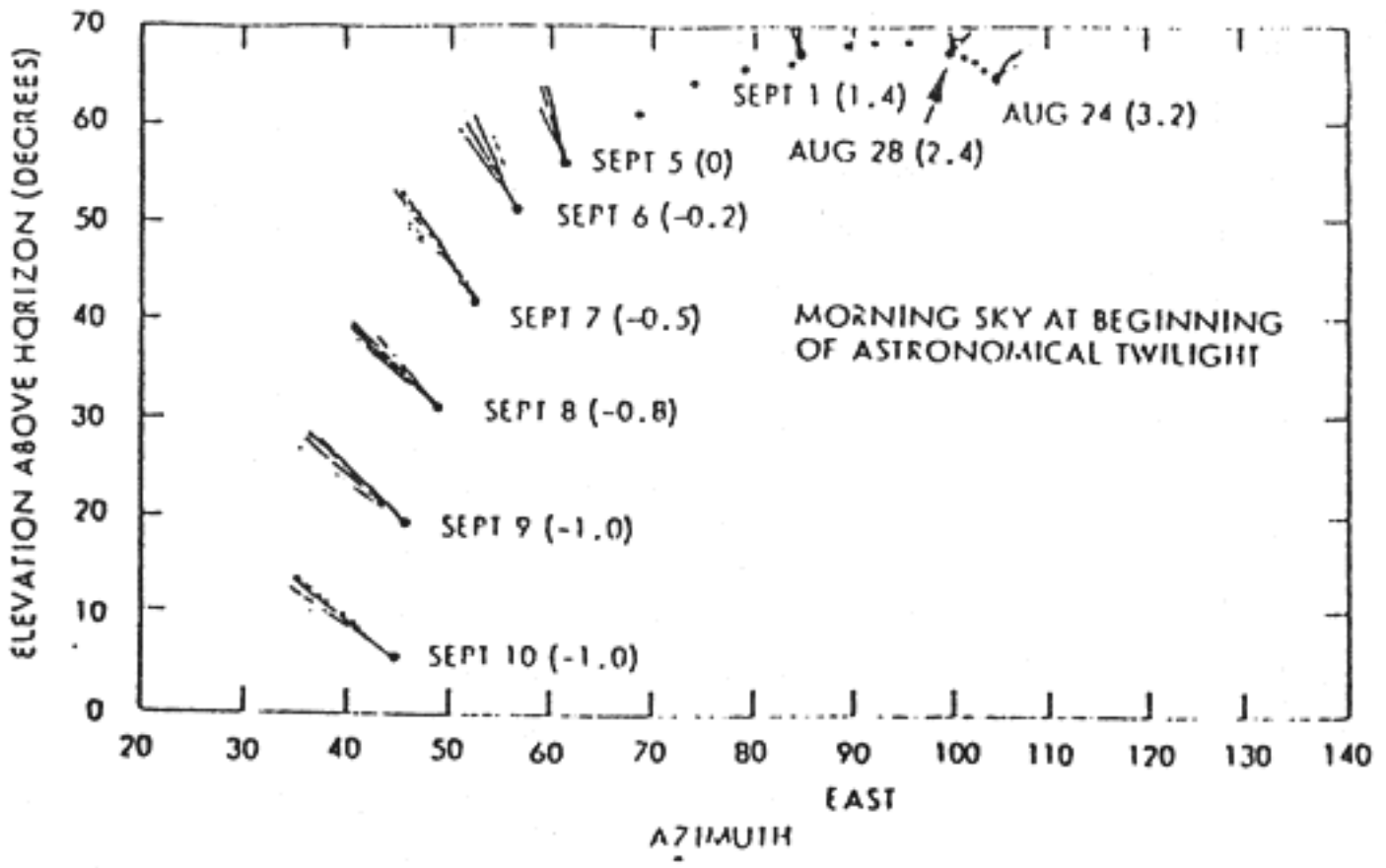
(62) 10 B.C. "During the third year of the Yuan-Yen reign-period a (po) comet was seen at Shê-Thi and Ta-Chio." (TCKM com. 7/36a)
This is only mentioned in the commentary of the TCKM.



EARTH-SUN SYSTEM FIXED-WITH COMET MOVING RELATIVE TO THE EARTH.

Drawing based on Ephemeris
Computation by D.K. Yeomans
R.S.F.

COMET HALLEY OBSERVING CONDITIONS IN 12 B. C.
OBSERVERS LOCATED AT 32° NORTH LATITUDE



For each date given on these charts the apparent magnitude of the comet is given in parentheses. An apparent magnitude of -1 is as bright as the brightest stars and each magnitude difference represents a brightness change of 2.5; thus on Sept. 9, 12 B.C., comet Halley would have been as bright as the brightest stars, while four days earlier, the comet would have been 2.5 times fainter (apparent magnitude = 0).